



Leading the Way 2025-26 Tour

MIAMI REPORT

HIGHLIGHTING WHAT WORKS

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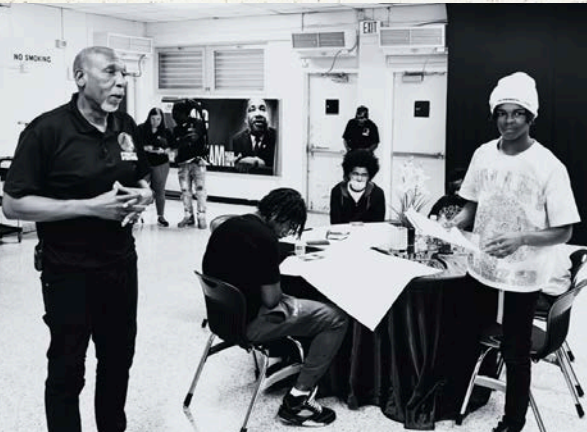
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LETTER FROM CITIES UNITED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: **AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Dear Miami Leaders, Partners, and Community Members,

On behalf of Cities United, I want to express our appreciation for the welcome, openness, and thoughtful engagement shared during the Miami stop of the Leading the Way Tour. Our time in Miami reflected a community with deep commitment to young people, strong relationships, and a clear desire to build safety in ways that are grounded in trust, opportunity, healing, and community leadership.

Miami is entering an important moment in its community safety work. Years of local leadership, youth engagement, and community-based action have created a meaningful foundation to build from. The tour highlighted the strength of trusted relationships, the importance of credible community presence, and the power of young people who are ready to help shape safer neighborhoods for themselves and those coming behind them.

At the same time, this is a moment that calls for care, listening, and continued relationship-building. Miami's public safety ecosystem includes committed leaders and partners, but the work ahead will require stronger coordination, clearer communication, sustainable resources, and shared spaces where partners can continue building trust with one another.

Cities United recognizes that we are still learning the local landscape, and our role is not to overstate what we know, but to reflect what surfaced, honor the work already underway, and identify opportunities for support.

The young leaders who participated in the tour offered some of the clearest guidance. They described safety as being able to make it home, feel protected, have support systems, and not have to worry. They also named the importance of family, faith, mentorship, sports, education, community programs, and having a voice. Their reflections remind us that safety is not created by one system or one strategy alone. It is built through consistent relationships, meaningful opportunities, trusted adults, and communities where young people feel seen, supported, and valued.

This report offers a short reflection on Miami's current strengths, opportunities, and areas for continued partnership. It is intended to support continued conversation, not close it. Cities United looks forward to learning alongside Miami leaders and partners as the work continues to grow.
In solidarity,

Anthony D. Smith
Executive Director, Cities United



INTRODUCTION

The Miami Leading the Way Tour stop created space to listen, learn, and better understand how local leaders, community partners, and young people are thinking about safety, opportunity, and coordination. The conversations reflected a city with a strong history of community-based public safety work, meaningful youth engagement, and a desire to strengthen the broader ecosystem around violence prevention, intervention, and healing.

The tour surfaced several connected themes: the importance of trusted relationships, the need for sustained resources, the value of young leader voice, and the opportunity to build stronger alignment across partners. Because Cities United is still early in its relationship with Miami, this report is intentionally focused and careful. It highlights what emerged most clearly while leaving room for further listening, verification, and relationship-building.

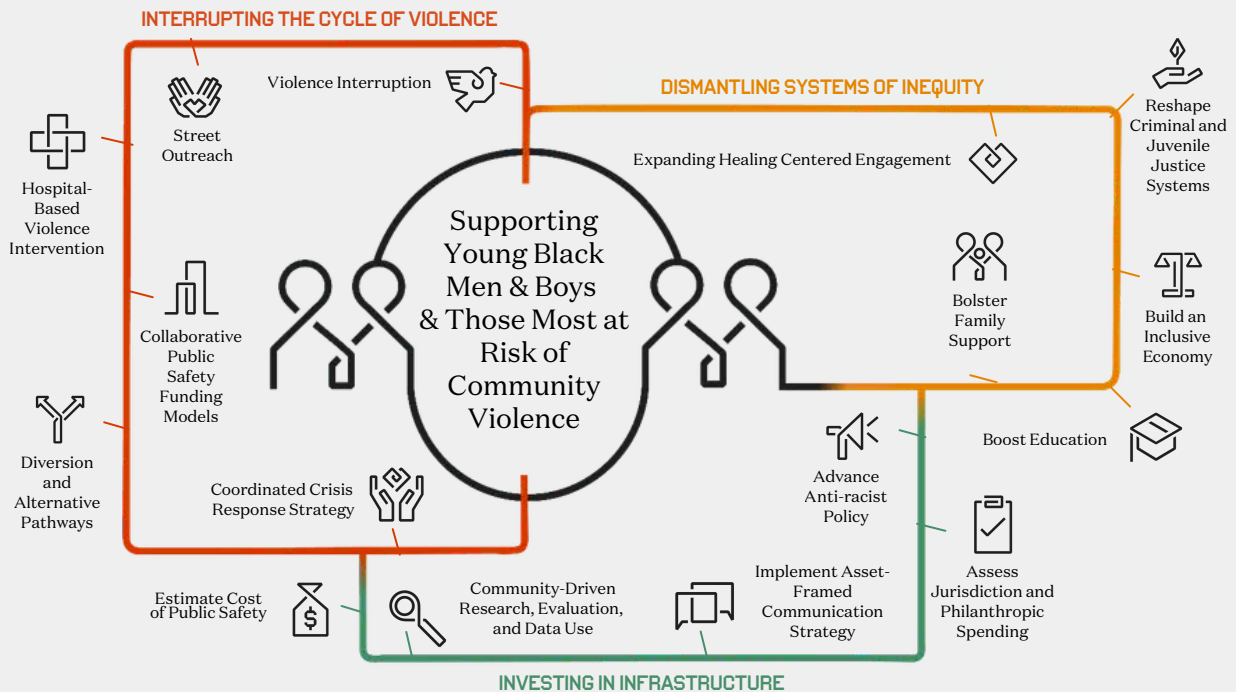
Public Safety Redefined: A Framework for Understanding Miami's Next Phase

Cities United's Public Safety Redefined framework offers a broader way to understand what communities need in order to be safe, healthy, and hopeful. It moves beyond a narrow view of public safety and centers the conditions, relationships, systems, and opportunities that help prevent violence, support healing, and create long-term wellbeing.

For Miami, this framework is especially useful because the Leading the Way Tour surfaced a safety landscape shaped by trusted relationships, youth voice, community-based leadership, and the need for stronger coordination and sustainability. The framework below provides a shared lens for interpreting what was heard during the tour and for identifying where Miami can continue building a more comprehensive public safety ecosystem.

COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC SAFETY ECOSYSTEM

FULLY IMPLEMENTED STRATEGY



PUBLIC SAFETY REDEFINED

Interrupting the cycle of violence
Dismantling systems of inequity
Investing in infrastructure

TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY FIRST RESPONDERS



UNDERSTANDING THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE

Miami's community safety work has been shaped by more than a decade of local organizing, youth engagement, employment programming, violence prevention efforts, and community-based response. The local timeline reflects steady growth from grassroots leadership into larger-scale programming, including youth success coaching, safe passage work, employment training, and community violence intervention strategies.

The ecosystem has also experienced changes in public and philanthropic investment over time. Local, federal, and philanthropic resources helped expand capacity, hire staff, and build out programming. More recently, shifts in county, federal, earmark, and ARPA-related funding have created pressure on the work and raised important questions about long-term sustainability.

The tour also highlighted the importance of youth voice in understanding the local safety landscape. Young people described safety in practical and relational terms: making it home, feeling protected, having support systems, being connected to family, faith, sports, mentors, internships, afternoon programming, community events, and trusted spaces where they can talk openly.

Grounded Strengths

Miami has a strong foundation of community-rooted leadership and trusted relationships. Young people named community-based supports, family, faith, mentorship, sports, and positive programming as important parts of what helps them feel safe. This reflects the value of consistent presence and trusted adults in the lives of young people.

Youth engagement was a significant strength of the tour stop. Young leaders participated in a full-day session and remained actively engaged through reflection, roadmap activities, and SWOT analysis. They were able to clearly define what safety means to them, identify what helps keep them safe, name barriers, and describe the roles they can play in supporting safety for their peers and younger youth.

Young leaders also showed a strong sense of responsibility. They named conflict resolution, mentoring, coaching, volunteering, creating safe spaces for peers, being role models, bringing other young people into positive spaces, and helping younger youth showcase their talents as ways they can contribute to community safety.

Another strength is the presence of multiple programmatic assets connected to youth development, mentoring, tutoring, job readiness, employment training, safe passage, and community-based violence prevention. These assets provide important starting points for continued ecosystem-building and deeper alignment across partners.

Persistent Challenges

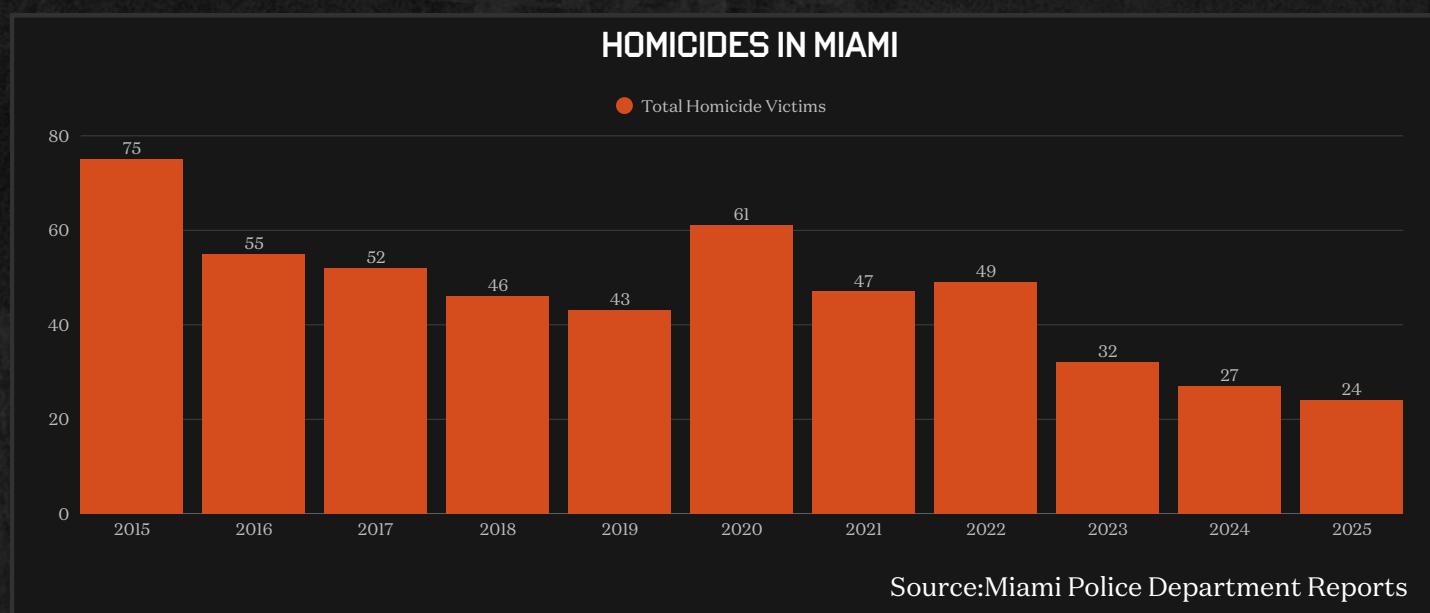
As Miami continues strengthening its community safety ecosystem, several areas surfaced as opportunities for deeper alignment, investment, and shared learning. These are not framed as deficits, but as conditions that many jurisdictions experience when important work is growing, resources are shifting, and partners are working to build stronger coordination over time.

One clear area for continued attention is sustainability. Community safety work depends on consistent staffing, trusted relationships, and reliable resources. Recent funding shifts have created pressure on local capacity, including reductions in staffing and concerns about how organizations can maintain programming at the level communities need. Sustaining this work will require thoughtful resource alignment, diversified funding, and support that allows trusted partners to plan beyond short-term funding cycles.

A second area is coordination across the broader ecosystem. Miami has committed leaders and organizations doing important work, but there is an opportunity to strengthen how partners come together, communicate, and move with a shared sense of direction. Participation, role clarity, and shared tables will matter as the ecosystem continues to mature. Building trust across partners will take time, consistency, and spaces where people can name priorities, clarify responsibilities, and identify where collaboration can be most useful.

Young leaders also named several conditions that affect their sense of safety, including violence, drugs, gangs, social media, unsafe environments, school climate, mental health, lack of resources, and the need for stronger adult support. Their reflections point to the importance of a public safety approach that reaches beyond crisis response and includes family support, mentorship, mental health access, school safety, economic opportunity, and positive spaces for young people.

Another area for care is communication and public understanding of the work. As community safety efforts grow, partners, residents, elected officials, and funders need clear and consistent information about what is happening, why it matters, and how they can support it. Stronger storytelling and public education can help build shared understanding while honoring the leadership already present in the community.





EMERGING MOMENTUM

Miami has several important points of momentum to build from. New and upcoming investments in youth employment and youth leadership create opportunities to deepen young people's role in shaping community safety. A youth employment training program connected to the NBA Foundation is expected to support 250 young people beginning in 2026, and Youth Peace Ambassador work was also identified as an area of support.

Young leaders demonstrated readiness to move from participation to leadership. Their ideas were practical, grounded, and focused on peer support, mentorship, conflict resolution, positive programming, and creating safe spaces for younger youth. This creates an opportunity to develop more formal pathways for youth voice, leadership, and decision-making within the local safety ecosystem.

There is also momentum around convening and ecosystem development. Priorities identified included implementation of a CVI Action Table, bringing partners together across different sides of the work, strengthening local CBO capacity, supporting South Miami, and exploring a statewide collaborative. These priorities point to a shared desire for stronger infrastructure, not just more programs.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

Miami's next phase of work will benefit from a careful balance of urgency and trust-building. There is clear energy, history, and commitment in the local ecosystem, but the work should move in a way that honors existing relationships and does not rush past the need for listening, clarity, and shared ownership.

The first strategic consideration is sustainability. Community safety work cannot depend only on short-term or unstable funding. Local partners will need support identifying flexible resources, strengthening funding narratives, and aligning public, private, and philanthropic investment around shared priorities.

The second consideration is coordinated infrastructure. Miami has trusted actors and important programmatic assets, but stronger coordination can help partners understand who is doing what, where gaps exist, and how to respond collectively when young people and families need support. This is especially important as the ecosystem considers implementation of a CVI Action Table and broader capacity-building for local CBOs.

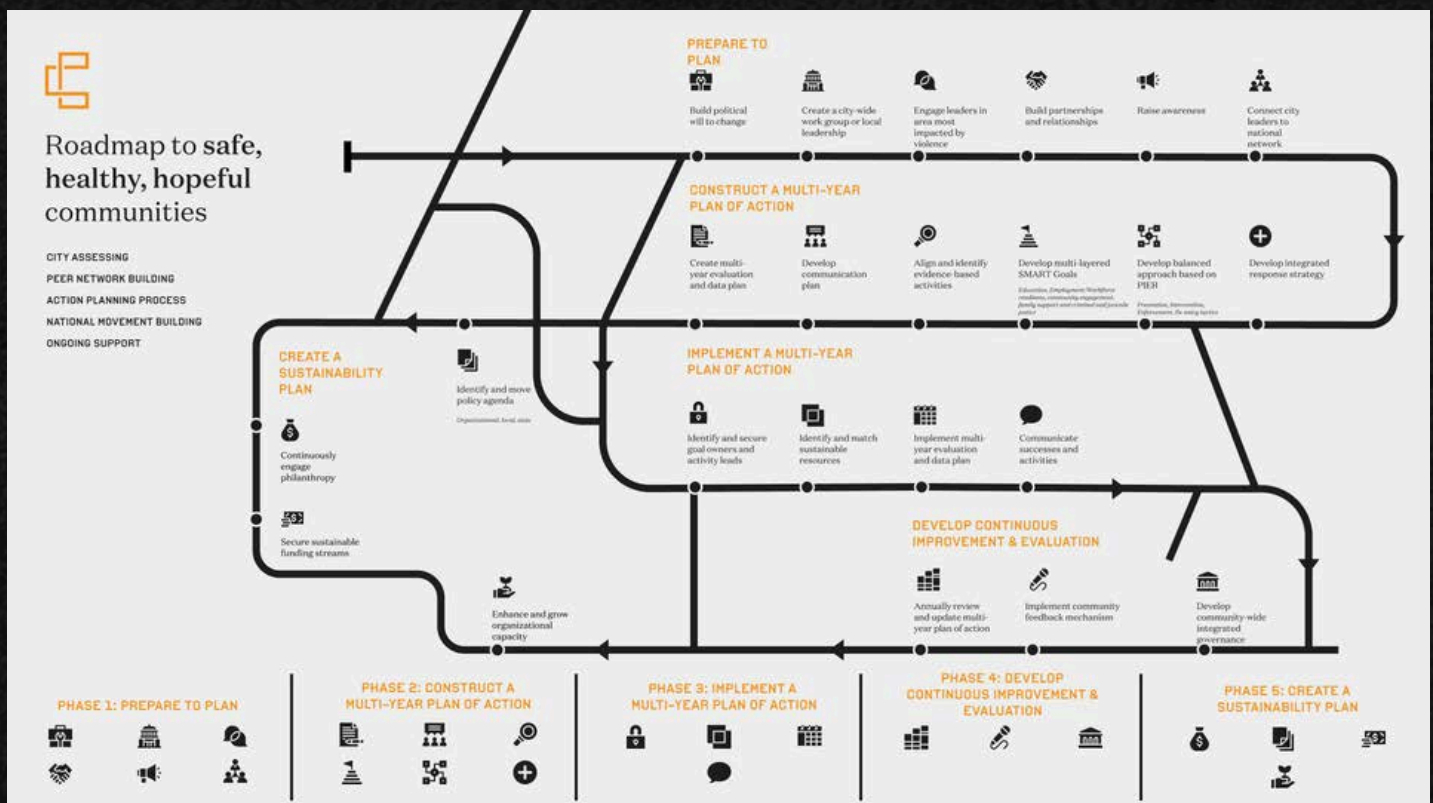
The third consideration is youth leadership. Young people were clear that they do not only want to be protected; they also see themselves as part of the solution. Creating structured, supported, and compensated roles for young leaders could help translate their insight into action.

The fourth consideration is narrative. Miami's work has a history, a set of trusted relationships, and a developing ecosystem that should be communicated clearly. Stronger public storytelling can help educate elected officials, engage funders, support community understanding, and lift up the role of young people and community-based leadership.

Roadmap to a Comprehensive Public Safety Plan

The Leading the Way Tour surfaced both Miami's foundation and its next set of opportunities. Miami has trusted community relationships, youth leadership, programmatic assets, and a history of community-based safety work. At the same time, the ecosystem would benefit from stronger coordination, clearer communication, sustainable resources, and shared structures that help partners move together.

The roadmap below offers a practical way to understand Miami's next phase of work. Rather than assuming that all elements of a comprehensive public safety ecosystem must be built at once, the roadmap helps sequence the work into phases that support learning, alignment, implementation, and sustainability.



RECOMMENDATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

FOR CITIES UNITED SUPPORT

The Miami Leading the Way Tour stop surfaced several opportunities for Cities United to support local partners in ways that are responsive to the current stage of the work. These recommendations are designed to strengthen sustainability, coordination, Young leaders, communications, and ecosystem capacity while honoring the leadership and relationships already present in Miami.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES: 3–6 MONTHS

1. SUPPORT A FOCUSED SUSTAINABILITY AND FUNDING STRATEGY

Work with local partners to identify immediate funding gaps, clarify priority needs, and develop materials that can support conversations with public, philanthropic, and private funders.

Why it matters:

Community safety work depends on consistency. When funding shifts quickly, organizations can lose staff, reduce programming, and struggle to maintain the trusted relationships that make the work effective. A focused sustainability strategy can help partners move from urgent funding conversations toward a clearer, more coordinated case for long-term investment. Recent funding shifts and staffing reductions make this an immediate priority.

2. STRENGTHEN ELECTED OFFICIAL EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT.

Develop short briefs, lunch-and-learn materials, and peer-learning opportunities that help elected and appointed officials understand community violence intervention, youth safety work, and the importance of sustained investment.

Why it matters:

Public officials play a critical role in sustaining this work, but they need clear, accessible information about what community-led safety is, how it functions, and why it requires long-term support. Education tools can help build shared understanding, reduce confusion, and create more informed champions for Miami's community safety ecosystem. The need for elected official education, including briefs, lunch and learns, and peer learning, was identified as a priority.

3. HELP CLARIFY THE PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THE CVI ACTION TABLE

Support partners in defining the table's goals, membership, operating rhythm, decision-making process, and connection to broader ecosystem priorities.

Why it matters:

A table is only useful if partners understand why they are there, what decisions are being made, and how the space helps move work forward. Clarifying the CVI Action Table can support stronger coordination, improve trust, and reduce duplication across partners. This is especially important in a jurisdiction where stronger convening and alignment were identified as needs.

4. CREATE A YOUNG LEADER ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Build on the energy from the youth session by helping young leaders organize shared priorities, develop leadership roles, and identify ways to contribute to safety planning and peer support.

Why it matters:

Young leaders showed that they are not only participants in the conversation; they are part of the solution. They named roles for themselves in conflict resolution, mentoring, coaching, volunteering, creating safe spaces, and supporting younger youth. A clearer structure can help move youth voice from a powerful tour moment into an ongoing leadership pathway.

5. PROVIDE NARRATIVE AND STORYTELLING SUPPORT.

Help local partners develop clear messaging that explains the work, communicates current needs, and lifts up the importance of community-led safety, youth voice, and trusted relationships.

Why it matters:

Strong work can still be under-supported if the story is not clear. Narrative and storytelling support can help partners communicate the value of their work to residents, elected officials, funders, and broader stakeholders. This is especially important as Miami navigates funding uncertainty and works to build wider public understanding of community-led safety. Narrative, communications, media, and marketing support were identified as needs.

LONG-TERM PRIORITIES: 12+ MONTHS

6. BUILD LOCAL CBO CAPACITY

Provide training and technical assistance focused on organizational infrastructure, program documentation, data use, communications, fundraising, staffing, and partnership development.

Why it matters:

A strong ecosystem cannot depend on one or two organizations carrying the work alone. Building local CBO capacity can help strengthen the broader safety infrastructure, support sustainability, and create more coordinated pathways for young people and families. Training and technical assistance for local CBOs was identified as a priority for strengthening the ecosystem.

7. SUPPORT BROADER ECOSYSTEM ALIGNMENT

Use Cities United's convening role to support continued trust-building, role clarity, and shared coordination across partners.

Why it matters:

Miami has strong community assets, but the work will be stronger if partners can move with greater clarity and coordination. Ecosystem alignment can help partners understand their roles, identify gaps, and build shared responsibility for safety. Because Cities United is still building relationships in Miami, this support should be paced carefully and grounded in listening, trust-building, and respect for local leadership.

8. EXPLORE A STATEWIDE COLLABORATIVE

Support early conversations about whether a statewide collaborative could strengthen learning, advocacy, funding, and alignment across jurisdictions.

Why it matters:

A statewide collaborative could create a broader platform for shared learning, policy education, resource development, and peer support. This should begin as an exploratory conversation, not a predetermined structure, to ensure that any statewide effort reflects local needs and adds value to the work already happening. A statewide collaborative was identified as an area of interest.

9. DEEPEN SUPPORT FOR SOUTH MIAMI

Work with local leaders to better understand the specific needs, assets, and opportunities in South Miami before identifying the most appropriate form of support.

Why it matters:

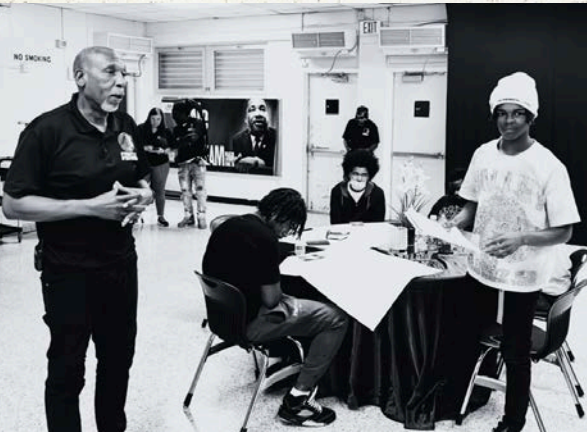
Support should be guided by local context, not assumptions. Before recommending specific strategies for South Miami, Cities United should continue listening and learning from local leaders, young people, and community partners. This will help ensure that future support is targeted, respectful, and aligned with what the community identifies as most useful. The need for resources to support South Miami was specifically identified.

Conclusion

Miami's Leading the Way Tour stop reflected a community with strong roots, committed leadership, and young people who are ready to help shape what safety looks like in their communities. The work has grown over time and includes meaningful assets in youth engagement, mentoring, employment, safe passage, and community-based violence prevention.

The next phase will require care, coordination, and sustained investment. Miami has the foundation to continue building a stronger public safety ecosystem, but doing so will require trust-building, clearer communication, stronger infrastructure, and resources that match the scale and importance of the work.

Cities United's role is to continue listening, learning, and supporting local leaders and partners in ways that honor what has already been built while helping strengthen the conditions needed for long-term safety, healing, and opportunity.





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